



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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SPENCE CALLS STATE OF AGING AND OBSOLETE EQUIPMENT “IRRESPONSIBLE”

Today, at a House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Procurement hearing on aging equipment, the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Floyd Spence made the following statement:

“There has been a vigorous debate over the past several years concerning the adequacy of the Administration’s defense modernization budgets. And this year is no different. Many have argued that a decade long “holiday” in weapons procurement was justified due to the robust modernization efforts of the 1980s and because older weapons did not need as rapid replacement due to the drawdown in the size of the force. But procurement spending has been cut by as much as 70 percent since the mid-1980s and the military’s technological edge that was so clearly demonstrated in the Persian Gulf War is being seriously eroded. And based upon the long lists of unfunded modernization requirements submitted to the committee over the years by the service chiefs, such concerns are valid.

“Without meaning to steal any of the thunder from our witness’ testimony, let me cite just a few statistics:

- The Marines who are likely to be the first American troops into Kosovo if there is a peace agreement, are flying 40-year old tankers and 30-year old helicopters.
- The Air Force – flying around-the-clock no-fly zone missions over Bosnia and Iraq – is flying 38-year old KC-135 tankers – aircraft that will be 79 years old when retired in 2040.
- The Air Force B-52s that just left for the Mediterranean are, on average, 37 years old and plans are to fly them for 30 to 40 more years.
- The air superiority variants of the Air Force F-15 are now expected to fly for 38 years before being retired.
- The Army that is being stretched so thin with peacekeeping mission after peacekeeping mission is flying 37-year old CH-47s, which are expected to fly for another 30 years...and is driving tanks that are now expected to be operational for as long as 36 years.

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- The Navy F-14 Tomcat, was introduced to the fleet in the mid-1970s, which makes it 1960's technology.
- The Navy is flying 20-year old P-3 anti-submarine warfare aircraft that they expect to fly for another 30 years.

“How many of us would drive a car that is 20 or 37 or 79 years old? Yet we are asking our sons and daughters to go to war in equipment that is older than they are. It is, quite frankly, irresponsible. We are counting on this equipment to get the job done. And bring our men and women back home to their families safely.

“This morning, in the full committee hearing with the Service Chiefs, when asked about funding for quality of life programs, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Krulak stated, ‘...the number one quality of life issue for my Marines and their families is bringing them home alive. And right now we’re in the position that we’re struggling to get the equipment to be able to allow them to go out and fight and win across the board...’

“Is this the best we can do for the men and women who serve in the military? I surely hope not.

“So I thank my colleague from California, Mr. Hunter, and my colleague from Virginia, Mr. Sisisky, for holding this very important hearing and look forward to the testimony.”

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